



**Connecticut State
Dental Association**

835 West Queen Street
Southington, CT 06489

860.378.1800 / phone
860.378.1807 / fax

CSDA.com

Legislative Testimony

**H.B. 6365 AAC The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2011,
And Making Appropriations Therefore**

Appropriations Committee

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

Bruce Tandy, D.M.D.

President-Elect, CT State Dental Association

My name is Dr. Bruce Tandy. I am a private practice general dentist in Vernon and Coventry. I am also the President elect of the Connecticut State Dental Association. Please accept this as my written testimony in regards to the Governor's proposed budget cuts.

Access to oral health care in Connecticut for those individuals who do not have insurance or the financial means to seek treatment has been problematic since I entered practice 30 years ago. The State of Connecticut had in place a Medicaid program that provided limited benefits to those who qualified. Reimbursement levels to practicing dentists were one third of the UCR from private insurance making all treatment provided to this population a losing business proposition to those dentists who participated in the plan. The reimbursement rates were not the only issue with administrative inadequacies and the failure of the target population to seek, schedule, and follow-up on the appointed care keeping the number of participating health care providers low and those that did provide care, did so without seeking reimbursement.

Finally, 2 years ago, following the settlement of a 7 year lawsuit to increase Medicaid reimbursements for children under the age of 21, a move in a positive direction occurred. The suit allocated dollars and cents, at least enough for the private practitioner to not lose money on every patient

treated, administrative changes, educational programs for the target population, and case workers to manage patient flow. Dentist participation increased to over 500 private practitioners and 200 public health dentists and hygienists. The target population was children but dentists were also seeing the adults that, though they were being reimbursed at half the Husky rate for children, needed care along with the youngsters. There was now a change in the access to oral health care problem in Connecticut.

The present financial crisis in the state has put huge constraints on the ability of state government to serve the needs of citizens of Connecticut. The Governor's budget cuts out all dollars and cents except for emergency oral health care treatment for adult Medicaid patients. This is the population that may need oral health care treatment the most. At the Connecticut Mission of Mercy event in last April, a two day charitable dental clinic provided by the CT State Dental Association and volunteers from around the state, the dental team treated 1,250 people, many of whom were adults in the category that will be most effected by these cuts. With the upcoming Mission of Mercy event this April in New Haven, we will treat over 2000 patients, barely touching the surface of those who will be seeking treatment.

With the increasing unemployment numbers, there will be more individuals seeking state help through the Medicaid program than ever before. To cut these dollars now when the need is greatest is not what I believe government is about. Oral health has been shown to not only effect the mouth, but the overall health of the individual. The cost in the future to repair the oral and physical health of the citizens of Connecticut by failing to prevent and treat health problems now, will ultimately be a financial quagmire, especially as the debate on universal health care begins.

Please reconsider these budget cuts as an investment in the health of the citizens you serve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bruce Tandy, D.M.D.
281 Hartford Turnpike
Vernon, CT 06066
860-875-2881